

the furniture was of the light and fanciful style of Louis Quatorze. Sometimes they found carpet, chairs, sofas, and curtains of most gorgeous hues, while the walls, woodwork, and ceiling, were kept perfectly sober. This state of things was unworthy the nineteenth century; and there was no reason why, in the great advances recently made in high art, the minor department of ornamental design should not keep pace with it. British history furnished us with subjects as fine as those of Greece or Rome, while our native genius equalled the lot of Homer, or the numbers of Greece, and was equally well calculated to form the basis of a British school of ornamental design. The most successful painter of half a century ago by Michelangelo Buonarroti for "improving the public taste" had signally failed, while the fantastic improbabilities of Watteau had also become stale: the Louis Quatorze style was also alien to the genius and feelings of the people of England, and had fallen aside. The veneered halls, the tapestried chambers, and the massive eastern furniture, were exchanged with feelings of comfort and subservience, and the revolutions which had recently taken place in house decorations afforded promise of a change of a higher and more elevated character. Mr. Ballantine then defended the system of painting in imitation of woods and marbles, which a recent high authority had condemned, and which had almost universal approval in this country. There was something gained, he held, in making a common fire door resemble some rare and beautiful wood so closely as not to be discovered without minute inspection, as a homely material, substitute of all beauty, had, at little cost, been converted into an object of admiration. As for deception, all nature was deception—the variety of leaves, the rainbow itself was a deception. This art of imitating woods and marbles was practiced some 200 years ago. One of the rooms of Hopson Tower was painted in imitation of marble in the time of James VI. Success in this art soon led to a more valued system of colouring apartments, and to using tints instead of full charged colours; and although this system of neutral tints at one time threatened the expulsion of positive colours, this style was being supplanted by more bold and vigorous arrangements of colour. The delightful tints and half tints produced in endless variety by the admixture of different proportions of the primary colours, compared with the representations of light and shade, could be so distributed and arranged as to produce the most soothing effects on the eye; and in this respect we greatly excelled the ancients, who, though skilled in colouring and contrasting, knew little of the effect of modifying tints. Mr. Ballantine then stated his opinion as to household decoration in the following words:—"In decorating a house the house-painter ought to proceed on precisely the same principles with the painter—namely, with a due appreciation of, and regard for, the effects of each detail in reference to the whole. He ought to introduce no jarring elements, no scraps and patches indicative of confusion or association; and of all things, let him beware of inconsistency and indelicacy. Every apartment ought to be treated in a manner corresponding with its purpose and use, and each portion in harmonious relation to another. In whatever way the walls are decorated, the ceiling should be ornamented correspondingly; but as the latter is further removed from the light, and as we naturally expect light to emanate from the space overhead, the colours used on it should be clearer and lighter than those on the walls. The floor, instead of being loaded with colour, as it is now in too many instances, by means of gaudy carpeting, ought to be kept of a low and deep tone; the floor, in fact, should appear a subdued and modified reflection of the ceiling. Treated in this way, the apartment would be kept entire, and any effect produced that might be wished. The ceiling is the only portion of a room of which we have at all times an uninterrupted view, and hence the necessity of having it decorated in a careful and pleasing manner. When seated, we naturally raise our eyes upwards, and when an agreeable combination of colour meets our view, the effect is peculiarly delightful. In some situations ceilings of a delicate tint of sky blue, studded

with golden stars, have a fine effect; and in some instances I have known the deception so complete, that when the apartment was artificially lighted, you could scarcely believe but that the canopy of heaven was your only covering. There, however, like everything else, ought to be kept in their place: when such as the walls of a room, they are not where they ought to be, and the effect is consequently bad. We do not look for stars in such situations, and are annoyed by their presence in such positions. A very legitimate kind of ornament for the walls of rooms seems to be well-balanced geometrical combinations of leading forms; well-proportioned panels or spaces, with combinations of tints, the configuration of which has been carefully copied from nature, and which, in my opinion, cannot be too honestly or too familiarly. I trust, however, that the time is not far distant when artists of high talent will not consider it beneath them to paint representations of life on such spaces; and this must ever be considered the highest order of wall-decoration. If the primary colours require to be used in their fullest intensity, they may be introduced into such combinations with excellent effect. They ought always, however, to be employed sparingly—a circumstance which will at once enhance their brilliancy and prevent them overwhelming the secondary colours and neutral tints that enter into the design. The effect of gilding on an apartment, when judiciously introduced, is highly poetical. It gives a new and more elevated character to everything in the room, while, without it, the finest designs look tame, flat, and insipid. Gold ought to be employed liberally in adorning ceilings; and in almost all cases the primary colours can be used in conjunction with it in their fullest intensity with excellent effect. On the other hand, the richest furniture loses half its effect when placed in a room in the decoration of which no gold has been employed. Under the influence of artificial light, gilding becomes still more imposing; and at all times, and in all places, the effect is exceedingly agreeable." Mr. Ballantine illustrated this opinion by alluding to the brilliant effect of gilded balustrades in staircases. He next proceeded to recommend gilding in panelled ceilings. He repeated the notion that the use of positive colours gave a room a contracted appearance, which could only arise from their being unskillfully used. "The use of paperhangings," he continued, "has of late years become very general and the reduction of duty on French papers which has taken place, will certainly have a tendency to improve the manufacture of English paperhangings, by engendering a new spirit of competition in the trade: nor can there be any doubt that we shall shortly rival, if not surpass, our neighbours in this department of art, as we have already done in the manufacture of other commodities. For my own part, I must say, that many French paperhangings which I have seen, though certainly remarkable for their skilful manipulation and delicate blending of colours, are by no means all that I should desire this species of decoration to be. The leading forms appear to me to be neither sufficiently distinct nor sufficiently simple, and, consequently, in large apartments, they appear petit and out of place. The attempt so frequently made in such cases to represent foliage in relief appears to me to be injudicious, as suggesting ideas of confusion and disorder. The flat configuration of Egyptian or Moorish ornament, filled in with tints of well-balanced colour, and defined by decided outlines, I consider infinitely preferable. The Chinese paperhangings, with all their crudities and absurdities, are remarkable for their balance of colour, while the colours themselves are so pure and decided, that, even in artificial light, the eye can discriminate between any tint as well as by the light of day. The blues and greens, which in our paperhangings, and even on our painted walls, entirely lose their identity in artificial light, retain their distinctive qualities on the Chinese papers. In one quality, however, both the Chinese and French paperhangings seem materially deficient—a deficiency which may be attributable to certain leading characteristics of both nations. This is repose—an essential in all great works of art, and especially required in

British decoration. There should, indeed, be repose as well as brilliancy in all designs. Where all the parts are equally dazzling the eye is pained and bewildered rather than pleased. What the middle distance is to a landscape, the due proportion of neutral tint is to ornamental decorations, and a considerable preponderance of such repose is in accordance with the stand character of the British people. What, for example, can be more out of keeping with the genius of British commerce than the petty scraps of foreign ornament, equally destitute of originality and grandeur, with which the ceiling and walls of the Royal Exchange in London are decorated? The former has no sympathy with the latter—the latter none with the former; and as to the emblems, if they have meaning, few understand what that meaning is, and fewer will care. One thing, however, is clear—nothing we see there appeals to any British feeling, or is calculated to awaken any association in any British bosom. Perception of beauty seems an inherent quality of the human mind, and man generally attains considerable skill in ornamental art before he has acquired any knowledge of the arts which contribute more immediately to his social comforts. Even in his rudest state, the productions of his taste and skill are often remarkable for their symmetrical beauty and delicate manipulation. The South Sea Islanders, with no other tools than such as they manufacture from sea-shells or bits of talc, produce specimens of carving closely approximating in excellence to the best efforts of our best artists; and in several authenticated fragments of ancient British art are to be traced vestiges of ornamental detail, remarkable for beauty of design and delicacy of execution. The adornment of the person seems to be the first stage in the adaptation of natural objects to decorative art. The child bedecks himself with daisies—the savage paints his body with ochre. When this propensity for adornment is extended to the dwelling-house, it evinces a more advanced stage of refinement and of social civilisation. Let the trophies of war, then, which bespeak the barbarism of the age that adopted them, be scattered to the winds, and let our ornamental devices be taken from the flowers of our fields—not fields of battle, but fields of peace and happiness; and thus shall our dwelling-houses be adorned with emblems suggestive of the domestic happiness and comfort of our own beloved country."

IRON STAYS TO OUR WOODEN WALLS.—We have hitherto had a highly-respectable prejudice in favour of oak, a prejudice which, perhaps, is to be attributed to our national taste for the solid and substantial in every thing; but, in these times of eager competition in every department of mercantile affairs, speed becomes an equally important requisite with solidity and strength for vessels engaged in the carrying trade. Upon Mr. Jordan's plan, speed and durability do appear in an eminent degree to have been attained. There is a world of the latter quality in the very phrase, "ribs of iron," before which our "heart of oak," smothered though it be by old association, dwindles into insignificance; while, in respect to the former, it need only be stated, that though the vessel launched on Saturday was nearly 300 tons burthen, yet her whole weight, hull, spar, rigging, sails, &c., would not weigh more than 100 tons, to convince us that the prime requisite for swift voyaging has been secured. A vessel, not exceeding 300 tons, constructed upon the old plan, would weigh, it is estimated, 300 tons at least. In reference to the *Marion Macintyre*, it has been confidently asserted, that if a cargo of double her tonnage capacity were placed in her, she would not draw more than twelve or thirteen feet of water. — *Liverpool Times*.

SOMERSET HOUSE TERRACE.—Will you allow me to mention that every time I journey by the "silent highway," I always regret, when passing the terrace of Somerset House, that upon each side landing-place, formed of rustic columns and cumbrian lions, should be permitted to remain composed brick chimney-shafts and common red chimney-pots, which I deplore the more, as by substituting Portland stone chimney-shafts in the form of pedestals, the eyesores can be at once removed at a trifling expense. W. P. GRAFFITH.